



The President's Daily Brief

May 19, 1976

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~~Top Secret~~ 25X1

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LEBANON: *The rift between Damascus and Palestinian leaders over Syria's recent attacks on Lebanese and Palestinian leftists has stalled attempts to work out a new ceasefire agreement. The joint Lebanese-Palestinian-Syrian truce committee apparently has not met since early last week.*

Libyan Prime Minister Jallud's efforts to mediate the dispute are not likely to amount to much. Jallud's lavish praise of Syria's role in Lebanon, on the one hand, and his promises of unlimited aid to the Lebanese left, on the other, underscore Tripoli's poor understanding of the nature of the dispute.

The Syrians seem to have little interest at the moment in resolving their differences with the Palestinians or in engineering a new truce. Their reluctance may be the result of their alleged agreement with the Christians to delay the transfer of power from President Franjiyah to Ilyas Sarkis until Syrian forces in Lebanon eliminate the security threat from Lebanese and Palestinian radicals. A report that additional Syrian troops moved into Lebanon yesterday lends additional credence to this allegation.

During the past two weeks, more than 1,000 regular Syrian troops have entered Lebanon, most of them disguised as members of Saiqa, the Palestinian group supported by Damascus. These troops are primarily concentrated in the Tripoli and Beirut areas. We believe there are well over 5,000 Syrian troops inside Lebanon and over 2,000 more in Syria adjacent to the east-central Lebanese border who could move in on short notice.

Heavy fighting continued in Beirut yesterday as leftist and Christian militiamen struggled to regain territory in the port area and commercial district. Both sides continue to shell residential areas and to impede the delivery of food and fuel supplies.

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The situation in the mountains east of the capital also worsened as leftist forces gained positions from which they can shell the Christian resort area of Farayya. The leftist advance on Farayya, which is well within the Christian core area, apparently triggered the renewal yesterday of a major artillery duel between the Christian city of Bayt Miri and Kamal Jumblatt's stronghold at Alayh.

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SYRIA-EGYPT: *The joint Saudi-Kuwaiti effort to mediate the dispute between Syria and Egypt appears to be off to an inauspicious start.*

Egyptian and Syrian leaders appear reluctant to reconcile their differences at their meeting which begins in Riyadh today. The Syrians seem determined to raise the second Sinai agreement as the principal topic of discussion and to elicit at least the appearance of change in Egypt's position on the accord as a condition for reconciliation.

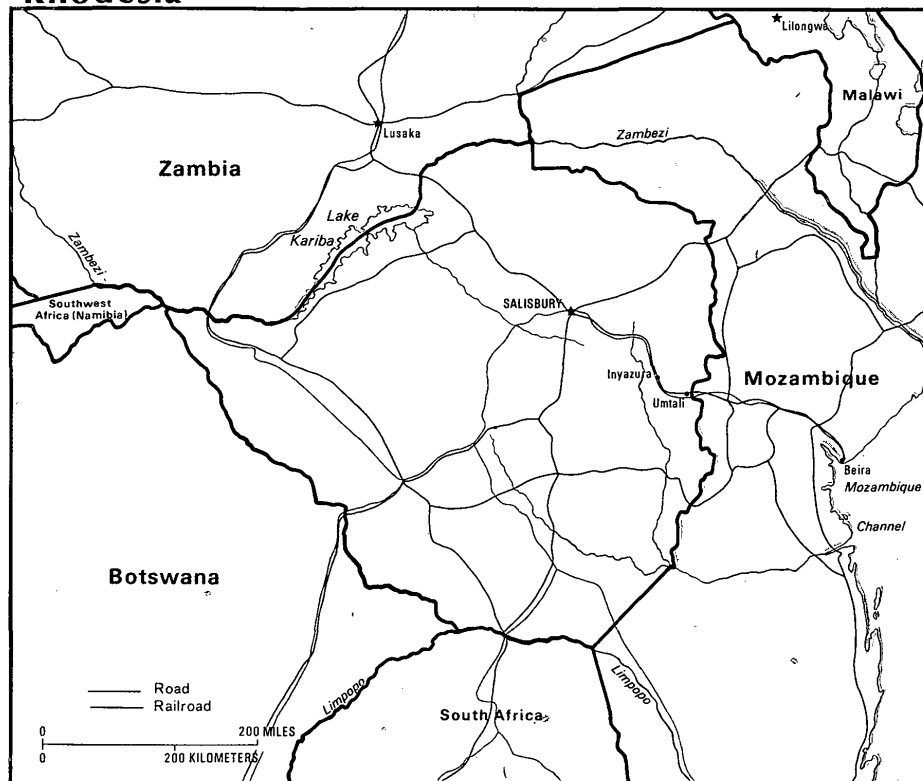
Cairo [redacted] will flatly refuse to discuss the Sinai agreement. The Egyptians will almost certainly avoid even a reiteration of their policy on the accord in order not to appear to be making concessions to Syria. 25X1

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Rhodesia



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RHODESIA: *Small groups of guerrillas appear to have penetrated deeper into Rhodesia than they have previously, despite more aggressive counterinsurgency operations by Rhodesian security forces.*

The heaviest action continues to be in the northeastern border area, the center of guerrilla operations. Last weekend, rebels blew up gas pumps in an attack at Inyazura, some 80 kilometers (48 miles) from the Mozambique border, forcing the government to suspend night passenger train service between Salisbury and Umtali.

Following the recent highly publicized attacks on rail lines, the Rhodesian government has increased security in the southeast, where they previously had few troops or police stationed. Thus far this month, the army has mounted two sweep operations in the region and has announced that its current offensive could last for some time.

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NOTES

Food shortages in the USSR are leading to reports in the Western press of civil disturbances.

The French newspaper Le Figaro carried an article on the subject yesterday. It said Westerners returning from the southern part of the European USSR report that, in Rostov and Kiev, stalls were smashed in the collective farm markets and windows of several state food shops were broken by Soviet citizens dissatisfied with the small amount of produce on sale.

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Turkey is planning to hold air and naval exercises in the Aegean from June 2-5 that will come within six to seven nautical miles of four Greek islands.

The Greeks reportedly believe the chances of a confrontation are low but are nonetheless concerned. The Turks have said on several previous occasions that they would hold exercises within the Greek-claimed 10-mile airspace limit but no penetrations were reported.

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